

# A Royal progress?

## Palm Sunday to Easter Day in Words and Music

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Each year from Christmas to Easter we follow the story of our Lord's life from birth to betrayal, death and resurrection. This article looks at the special music and words we use as we remember the events towards the end of this story.



When Jesus rode into Jerusalem, the people praised God for Him.

We begin on **Palm Sunday (16<sup>th</sup> March) at 10.00 am**. The people have heard that a new king (The 'Hope of Israel') is arriving and get ready to greet him with palms, shouts of

praise (Hosanna to the Son of David) and a great procession (All Glory, Laud and Honour). But the king arrives on a donkey and seems troubled. He is worried about his future and the path he must tread (Told in a dramatised version of the Gospel). This story is reflected in the Communion Motet (Christ became obedient for us, unto death *Bruckner*) and told again in *The Crucifixion* by *Stainer* at **6.30 pm**.

On **Maundy Thursday (20<sup>th</sup> March)** he calls his friends together to share a meal. He tells them that he is leaving them and breaks bread and pours wine, explaining that he is to be broken to save us. Afterwards he is arrested and his friends desert and deny him. So we celebrate the institution of the Eucharist and then re-enact the desertion by stripping the church at the end of the Eucharist (Commemoration of the 'Last Supper' **8.00 pm**). We sing Psalm 22 'My God my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?' as this is done and leave the church in darkness and sorrow.

On **Good Friday (21<sup>st</sup> March)**, our Lord is tried, condemned and executed. We remember this through our Family Service at **9.30 am**, the Witness in the town and reflect on his sacrifice for us in an Hour at the Foot

of the Cross at **2.00 p.m.** In the evening at **6.30 pm** we link this with the themes of Maundy Thursday in a meditation based round 'Lo, the Full, Final Sacrifice', words on the Eucharist by Richard Crashaw, set to music by *Finzi*, and the poignant, plainsong-based Requiem of *Durufilé*.

On **Easter Saturday (22<sup>nd</sup> March)** news breaks that the Sepulchre has been opened and is empty. As night falls this news spreads and hope returns to those who watched and waited. At **8.00 pm** we meet to hear the Good News and celebrate the return of hope. The Light of Christ returns and our church dispels the gloom with a great outburst of joy (*Gloria*) and light.

Some churches then keep watch for the dawn of **Easter Day (23<sup>rd</sup> March)** – The Day of Resurrection and celebrate the First Communion of Easter at dawn. We all come together to be reminded of the great news at **10.00 am** and **6.30pm** and rejoice in God's great gift to us (This is the day that the Lord has made *Byrd* and *Worthy* is the *Lamb Handel*).

It has often been said that we are an Easter faith – a story of Hope and New Life. That Hope and our faith are based on the events of our Lord's life. Without the Betrayal, Denial and Death of Maundy Thursday and Good Friday the Good News of Resurrection would not be possible. So perhaps we are also a Good Friday faith.



Please join us on this journey of Hope, Denial, Grief and experience the Joy of the New Life of Easter to the full.